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A Day in the Tokyo Tabernacle

By WILLIAM AXLING



AMERICAN BAPTIST FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY

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A DAY IN THE TOKYO TABERNACLE

By WILLIAM AXLING



TOKYO is the metropolis of the Orient. Two and a half million people are crowded within its borders. Right at the heart of this throbbing mass of humanity the Tabernacle rears its substantial cathedral-like front.

OUR LOCATION.

The location of the Tokyo Misaki Tabernacle is strikingly strategical. On one side the business section presses right up against its doors. On the other hand lies the extensive Government Arsenal with its ten thousand employees. On still another side there stretches for miles a solid impact of homes and shops.

Moreover in the one ward that encircles the Tabernacle there is a student population of 40,000 in educational institutions and boarding houses. Within a radius of six blocks are located more than thirty institutions for higher education and scores of others of secondary grade. One of these higher institutions alone enrolls 6,000 students. The remainder each enroll from 700 to 2,000. Tokyo is the Mecca for the students of all Japan and Kanda ward is their rallying center.

OUR MISSION.

We conceive our mission to be that of incarnating the spirit of Christ in an institution, and through its work and workers make the living, saving, and serving Christ real and visual to the people. Evangelizing, educating, serving are the three words that loom large in our program of work. We aim to minister to the whole man and to serve

the whole community. In our activity we recognize the individual as the unit, but we make the serving and Christianization of the community our great goal.

OUR IDEAL.

The Tabernacle aims to become a community center. We are endeavoring to plant ourselves deep down into the life of the little world that surrounds us. We strive to make its problems our problems. We yearn to become the rallying center for the life of our environment, a help, a haven, a home, an inspiration, an incentive to a higher and larger life to all the members of our community.

We have no bolted doors and no blinded windows. We are tackling our task from seven o'clock in the morning until ten at night, seven days in the week, fifty-two weeks in the year. Something is doing all the time, and in the evening half a dozen things on at the same time is the rule rather than the exception.

Something for every one is our motto. Something that will interest all ages. Some activity that will appeal to and help and influence every class and every group of our community. This accounts for the great variety of the lines of work in which we are engaged.

But everywhere and all the time we strike the evangelistic note, Christ is humanity's greatest need and the Gospel is the World's greatest message. Evangelism runs like a golden cord through our whole program and gives direction and definiteness of purpose to all our activity. All our work is shot through with the Gospel message. We are not satisfied to simply "fill up the small gaps of a thousand minor needs." We dare not be neglectful of these needs. But infinitely more "we are here to fill up one appalling emptiness with the glorious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ." In every school, in every class, in every gathering of whatever nature definite provision is made for making the Gospel appeal.

OUR PROGRAM

Evangelistic:

SUNDAY SERVICES
WEEK NIGHT EVANGELISM
BIBLE CLASSES
SUNDAY SCHOOL WORK
WOMEN'S SOCIETY
YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY

Educational:

NIGHT SCHOOL FOR YOUNG MEN
NIGHT SCHOOL FOR YOUNG WOMEN
AFTERNOON SCHOOL FOR YOUNG WOMEN
KINDERGARTEN
SATURDAY PUBLIC LECTURES

Social Service:

MEN'S FRIENDLY SOCIETY
NURSE'S NEIGHBORHOOD VISITING
APPRENTICES' NIGHT SCHOOL
WORKING GIRLS' NIGHT SCHOOL
NURSERY FOR CHILDREN OF WORKING MOTHERS
NEIGHBORHOOD CHILDREN'S PLAY GROUND
FREE LEGAL ADVICE BUREAU
WORKINGMEN'S WELFARE WORK

A MORNING AT THE TABERNACLE.

Tokyo-ites are early risers and we try to keep pace with our neighbors. Thus work begins early. At 7:30 the children's care-taker is on hand ready to greet the mothers as they bring the little tots who are cared for in the Day Nursery. Here from 7:30 in the morning until 6:00 at night are mothered the little children of working mothers. Were it not for the Day Nursery these mothers would in many cases have to entrust these little ones to a child only a few years older — and worry all day about both of them

— or else carry them on their backs while they work. What joy and relief is pictured on their faces as they leave them in this haven for tot-hood! Hard work awaits them but there is no worry about the wee one.

The forty children enrolled in the Day Nursery put us in most intimate touch with homes that need our sympathy and constructive help. Bible classes and special meetings are held for the parents of these children and effort is made to infuse some color into their dull and humdrum lives.

At 8:30 the children of the Kindergarten begin to gather and by 9:00 the corridors resound with the merry shouts of eighty happy husky Japanese children — than whom there are no more attractive children in all the wide world. Then begins the Kindergarten program for the day, a simple prayer, songs, games, hand-work and many things that are interesting and instructive to the child mind and heart.

Through the children in the Kindergarten we are thrown into direct contact with multitudes of the homes of our community. The teachers visit in these homes. Monthly meetings are held for the mothers. Everything is done to improve the advantage gained through this contact with the home-life of our neighborhood.

AN AFTERNOON AT THE TABERNACLE.

At 2:00 o'clock the halls again re-echo with the tramp of many feet and much child-chatter. The children of the Kindergarten are getting their wooden clogs and lunch baskets and are starting for home. Then there is a lull, but only for an hour.

At 3:00 the Children's Play Ground is thrown open and the children from the neighborhood come hurrying in. There is no park, no play ground, and no yard space to the homes of this congested district and the utilizing of our Roof Garden and our Kindergarten play ground for a Recreation Center is a great boon to the child life around

us. Here there is whole-hearted play under the direction of the children's secretary and a period of quiet listening to some Bible story or a helpful talk.

At 3:30 the Afternoon School for Young Women opens and young women are in evidence. Many of these are students from other schools. Some are teachers. Others are married women. All are eager to learn English which is the one thing taught in this afternoon school. A twenty minute chapel service each day brings home to their hearts the claims of Christ upon their lives.

AN EVENING AT THE TABERNACLE.

To really appreciate the hum of activity of an evening at the Tabernacle demands one's personal attendance. At 5:30 the young women begin to gather for the Night School for Young Women. These are mostly from that growing class of girls who have been forced out of the sheltered life of the women of old Japan and thrust forth into the soul-less competitive life of modern commercialism. In shops and offices they are beset by more temptations and dangers than any other class of women in the life of present day Japan. The main purpose of this school is to establish points of contact with them, befriend them, and gird them for the moral battles that confront them in their daily environment. Last year 118 girls were enrolled in these two girls' schools.

At 6:00 the halls are crowded with young men who are coming for the Night School for Young Men. This is an English school for students and for the young men from business offices. Most of them could not be gotten into an evangelistic service but they are keen after English, and while we teach them we preach to them through the special chapel service that is held for them every evening. Some of our finest converts come from this school. The past year 293 young men were enrolled in this school.

At 7:00 bedlam breaks loose for a few moments. The lads from the surrounding work-shops and homes come rushing in for the Apprentices' Night School. In Japan the lot of the average apprentice is far from enviable. He is apprenticed at the age of twelve or younger. Then for the next seven or eight years the master's greatest concern is to get as much service out of him as possible. His only remuneration is his food and clothing, and that often of the cheapest kind. Opportunities for recreation, and for intellectual and spiritual improvement there are none. For these lads this night school is a boon. Their earnestness and zeal is a constant inspiration.

At 7:00 the Working Girls' Night School also begins its work. Here working girls from nearby homes and work-shops are given instruction in the elementary branches, in simple methods of caring for the sick, in sewing and in kindred hand-work.

In each of the above four night schools a regular period is set aside, each evening that they are in session, for religious instruction. Because of the difference of sex and the difference of mentality each school has to have its own chapel service. Here they are brought face to face with Christ and the claims of the higher life.

At 7:30 the General Evangelistic Meeting begins in the evangelistic hall just off the street and passers-by are urged to come in and listen to the story of stories. The attendance varies greatly. Yet here we get those who are really anxious to know life's best way. This meeting is often followed by personal talks with those who are especially interested. And often these talks close with prayer and the surrender of the life to Christ. Oh! the unspeakable joy of leading a human soul into the mystery of a new birth and a new life!

Three nights in the week, after the men's night school classes, special Bible Classes and a class in Gospel Singing are held for the benefit of the students of this night school.

In addition to this Adult Bible Classes are organized for both men and women and every effort is made to get as large a number as possible of those who are connected with the different lines of work, into these classes for the direct study of the Bible. The response is very gratifying.

Often there is a special meeting in the auditorium or a committee meeting or prayer meeting in the committee room. Thus activities are on in most of the thirty rooms that make up the three stories of the building. Direct personal influence is being exerted. The truth is proclaimed. Lives are being cast into the Christ-mould.

OTHER SPECIAL FEATURES.

The workingmen's lot is particularly hard. His working hours are long — from ten to fifteen hours a day. He has no Sundays and holidays are few. No one takes any special interest in him and nothing is done to relieve the hard grind of his life. Taking advantage of the fact that the 15th of each month is the workingmen's holiday we on that day hold a Special Workingmen's Meeting. In this meeting there is an earnest heart-talk, full of Gospel hope and good cheer. This is followed by special music, or an instructive moving picture exhibition, or a clean story told by some one gifted in that line. We strive to minister to their spiritual needs, to break the dull monotony of their humdrum life and to infuse some cheer into their empty existence.

The Men's Friendly Society is an organization that endeavors to befriend the friendless man who is lost to sympathy and heart-friendship in the rushing hurrying life of this great city. To him the only place where there is brightness and cheer and action is the place of sin. By the scores young men are driven to sin and vice by grinding monotony and loneliness of their narrow isolated lives. These we try to befriend. They are encouraged to use the Reading Room, Game Room, Roof Garden, and to make the Tabernacle their retreat. Special meetings are held

for them. Special occasions are provided for them in our home. Above all we strive to lead them to know the Friend of friends.

On Saturday evenings Public Popular Lectures are held. This is our forum. Here are discussed by Christian men the great vital problems of life. We try to show to the world that the church is not another worldly, dreamy organization that concerns itself only with super-mundane affairs, but that it is wide-awake and intensely interested in every question that concerns the welfare of mankind. Such questions as social purity, sex-hygiene, homemaking, temperance, sanitation, tuberculosis and kindred themes that make for a cleaner and higher community and national life are here dealt with from the Christian point of view.

Nurse's Neighborhood Visiting is carried on by a graduate nurse and mid-wife. She visits the homes of the poor, hunts up the sick of our neighborhood and is an angel of mercy to many. Through working arrangements with physicians and hospitals she assists in providing medical help and hospital care where needed. To her the mothers bring their problems. Often the workless are helped to find work. She herself is the community's burden-bearer and she points burdened hearts to the Great Burden-Bearer.

A Free Legal Advice Bureau provides help for the poor who have fallen into the hands of the merciless money-lender or the quack lawyer or into some legal difficulty.

THE CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH.

The Central Baptist Church is a self-governing, self-supporting Japanese church that makes the Tabernacle auditorium its church home. The Sunday services, the Sunday School, the Women's Society and Young Men's Society are entirely under its care and through these it carries on an aggressive and far-reaching work. Its pastor,

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